

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION MCT-01

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 ARA-10 SY-02 PA-01 INR-05
L-01 CA-01 HA-02 CIAE-00 SCS-01 ICAE-00 NSCE-00
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P 172200Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8046

S E C R E T BOGOTA 4705

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEC CASC PINS CO
SUBJ: CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE ON STARR KIDNAPPING

REF: STATE 124972

1. AS WE SEE IT, THE MOST SIGNIFICANT AND TROUBLESOME PROBLEM FACING THE USG, AND ITS SPOKESMEN, AT THE TIME STARR IS RELEASED WILL BE TO AVOID GIVING THE IMPRESSION, OR CONTRIBUTING TO SPECULATION, THAT STARR'S LIBERTY WAS OBTAINED BY ACCEDING TO FARC'S DEMANDS THAT GAURACAS BE FREED. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT SOME OF THE PROPOSED ANSWERS GIVEN IN REFTEL MAY UNINTENTIONALLY INVITE SUCH SPECULATION BECAUSE OF THE QUALIFICATIONS WITH WHICH THEY ARE FORMULATED. WE HAVE IN MIND PARTICULARLY THE PHRASE STATING THAT THERE WERE NO CONDITIONS "THAT WE ARE AWARE OF" AND ALSO THE SENTENCE READING "I CANNOT SAY MORE THAN THAT" WHICH FOLLOWS WHAT MIGHT BE REGARDED AS AN INTRIGUING REFERENCE TO THE "VARIOUS WAYS" IN WHICH WE ASSISTED MRS. JENSEN. MORE-OVER, THE ADMISSION THAT WE HELPED HER ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE FARC COULD ALSO LEAD TO SPECULATION THAT SOME SORT OF USG/FARC DIALOGUE WAS INVOLVED.

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2. AT THE SAME TIME, WE APPRECIATE THE DIFFICULTIES OF TRYING TO FIELD THE SORT OF QUESTIONS THAT ARE LIKELY TO ARISE AND WE BELIEVE WE UNDERSTAND THE REASONS DICTATING THE FORMULATIONS CITED. OUR SUGGESTION, THEREFORE, IS TO LET THOSE ANSWERS STAND AS GIVEN IN REFTEL AND SIMPLY TO ADD AN EXPLICIT REAFFIRMATION OF THE USG POLICY AGAINST ACCEDING TO TERRORIST DEMANDS. WHILE SUCH A REAFFIRMATION WILL NOT

WORK MAGIC HERE, IT WILL HELP AT LEAST SOMEWHAT IN COUNTERING THE IMPRESSION THAT POLITICAL OR OTHER GAINS CAN BE MADE BY KIDNAPPING PC VOLUNTEERS OR USG EMPLOYEES STATIONED IN COLOMBIA. WE HAVE IN MIND PARTICULARLY THE FACT THAT THERE ARE MANY TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS, TO SAY NOTHING OF CRIMINAL ELEMENTS, WHO POSE A THREAT TO OUR PERSONNEL. WHILE THE FARC PRESUMABLY HAS A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT HAPPENED REGARDING GUARACAS, THE OTHERS MAY NOT AND WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO COUNTER ANY MISTAKEN IMPRESSIONS THEY MAY DERIVE FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF STARR'S RELEASES. ASENCIO

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